***Children’s Fiction: Whose voice needs to be heard****?*

**Portal: Geographic Value Judgements**

**Critical Challenge**

Critical Task

Determine the key stakeholders with pivotal voices whose positions must be heard on a given issue before making a judgment.

Overview

In this challenge, students develop an understanding of the importance of hearing a variety of perspectives on an issue by deconstructing a children’s story (in this case, *The Lorax*) and determining:

* whose voices were heard
* whose were not heard
* which characters’ perspectives were ***pivotal***

They apply this understanding to an issue they are studying in their current unit using the thinking strategies they have learned.

**Objectives**

**Broad Understanding**

Students will understand that value judgements about what should happen are often best made when key stakeholders are consulted. They will understand that the act of deciding whose voice will be heard is, in itself, a value judgement that requires us to be fair-minded in order to make an informed decision.

**Requisite tools**

*Background knowledge*

*Criteria for judgment*

* criteria for a key stakeholder whose voice is pivotal (e.g. will likely experience the issue differently than other groups; is often unrepresented or underrepresented; is likely to contribute new information based on experience or position, …other? – check Pivotal Voices)

*Critical thinking vocabulary*

**Bias:** Favouring one view over another, noticing some things rather than others. Also can be a blindness to weaknesses in our own point of view

**Perspective:** A way of seeing a situation based on your experience.

*Thinking strategies*

*Habits of Mind:*

**Fair-minded**: to judge on the basis of merit and not simply on personal interests or preferences

***Suggested Activitives***

**Session One**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **In this section, students will:** | **Instructions to the teacher** |
| *Be introduced to the concept of pivotal voices through a concrete example* | Provide students with the following scenario: *Our school is facing a budget crisis. We are low on funds to maintain the grounds, repair the building and buy supplies and books for classrooms. We need to do something. A development company has approaches our school board with an idea. The company wants to buy some of our school property and build residential housing on it. It has proposed several different options: building an apartment on top of the school; building houses along the perimeter of our property, turning the field into an indoor stadium and building apartments on top of it, etc.*  *Although the decisions about whether or not to accept the proposal will be made at a board meeting, our school has been asked to send representatives of different stakeholder groups to the meeting. We can send 5 different representatives. Who should we send?*  Invite students to individually brainstorm a list of groups that would be affected by this decision. Challenge them to come up with at least 10 different groups of people (see BLM #1: Who should we send?).  Ask them to share their list with a partner and then with the class. Invite partners to list the groups that would be affected and record ideas on the board until all ideas have been recorded. Student answers might include:  - all students  - students on sports teams’  - parents worried about security  - people who would eventually live in the apartments  - neighbours of the school  - other groups that use the school (e.g. night school classes, little league sports teams who use the field  - wildlife that lives in the school field  - teachers  - local business owners  - etc.  Next, ask students to consider whether there are any groups that might not be directly or even indirectly affected but who might have crucial information we should consider.  Once a long list of groups who are likely to be affected by the decision has been compiled on the board, remind students that we can only send representatives from 5 groups.  Invite students to think about and share their ideas about the kinds of decisions they will have to make. |
| *Understand the concept of Geographic Value Judgements* | Suggest that the decision about whose voices should be heard when making a decision about any geographical issue is a type of **geographical value judgement**.  Explain that whenever people think about what are the most ***desirable*** solutions, which option is ***best***, what we ***should*** do, we are making value judgements. |
| *Considering stakeholder interests* | Invite students to extend their thinking about the initial scenario by considering how the proposed action (in this case, selling part of the school property to developers) might impact various stakeholders.  Provide students with BLM #2: Comparing Stakeholder Interests. Invite them to consider what each stakeholder’s concerns or interests are likely to be.  Invite students to consider whether it might be necessary when looking at a real issue (rather than a fictional scenario) to gather more information beyond their assumptions about how certain groups will be affected. How might they find out about the interests and concerns of stakeholders? Possible student responses might include:  - interviews  - materials directly released by stakeholder groups (e.g. press releases, websites)  - responses to similar situations (e.g. How have various environmental groups reacted in the past to expanded development in your region?)  Finally, invite students to decide whether or not they see patterns or trends emerging across stakeholders. For example, do 3 or 4 of them share the same concerns or interests? Is there one group which is affected differently than others? |
| *Building*  *criteria for a key stakeholder with a pivotal voice* | Suggest that we **criteria** would help us filter our list and decide who to send to the school board meeting in this scenario. Ask students to work with a partner to finish the following sentence prompt: “We should send reprensentatives of groups who...”. Indicate that they may finish the sentence with 3-5 different endings. Remind them that they are not selecting groups yet, but rather, thinking about what factors we should consider when deciding who to send to the meeting.  As students deliberate, you may notice them thinking about their desired solution (i.e. the proposal to build residential dwellings should or should not be accepted) and then talking about sending representatives of groups that would advocate for or agree with their personal position. This might be a good time to remind students as a group of the importance of being **fair-minded**.  **Habit of mind: fair-minded**  Explain to student that when someone is fair-minded he or she makes decisions on the basis of merit and not simply on personal interests or preferences.  Invite students to think of 2 things that might result of not being fair-minded when making a decision about which stakeholders to consult. Student responses might include:  - some groups will always get left out because they have an opposing opinion  - a good decision might not be made because you don’t hear all the information  - after the decision is made, there might be a lot of resistance or criticism from groups who were not consulted at all  Ask them to return to building their criteria for selecting which groups should be represented at the school board meeting. Invite them to share their answers with the whole class. During the class discussion, draw out criteria for a “key stakeholder”. A key stakeholder is one:  **Criteria for Judgement**   * who will likely experience the issue differently than other groups * whose interests are often unrepresented or underrepresented * is likely to contribute new information based on experience or position   Invite them to return to their list of all possible groups that might be affected by the decision or have valuable information to contribute and assess whether this criteria helps them make a decision about which groups’ representatives to send to the meeting. Add to or refine the criteria as necessary.  Consider posting the criteria on a piece of chart paper for future reference. |

**Session two**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **In this section, students will:** | **Instructions to the teacher** |
| *Practice applying criteria* | Explain to students that their next step is to practice applying criteria to see if it helps us decide who the key stakeholders are for a particular issue or situation.  Provide them with BLM #3: Who are the key stakeholders?  Read aloud *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss. Alternatively, you may wish to show them the short video of *The Lorax*.  ***Opportunity for Differentiation:***   * *Provide students who would benefit from it a copy of the script while you read or while they view the video. Ask them to circle the names of possible stakeholders while they read. The script is provided on BLM #4: The Lorax.*   Invite students to imagine that they were re-writing the story. Ask them to imagine that after the appearance of the Lorax the first time, the Once-ler decided to hold a meeting and invite the key stakeholders to air their concerns about his proposed plans. Invite students to work with a partner to use BLM #2: Comparing Stakeholder Interests and BLM #3: Who are the key stakeholders? to identify all the groups or individuals who are referenced in the story and then to assess whether they are key stakeholders according to the criteria.  Ask students to share their decisions with the class. Discuss differences of opinion that emerge regarding who the key stakeholders are. You may wish to extend the discussion by asking students to consider the advantages and disadvantages of inviting all affected groups versus key stakeholders as determined by our criteria. You may wish to return to the discussion of being fair-minded and ask:  - Is it only fair if all voices to be heard? Or, can some groups represent the issues of others?  - Are there problems associated with gathering input from all individuals who might be affected that will hinder finding an effective solution? Or is this the only fair way to proceed? |
| *Transition to independent practice* | Invite students to summarize in their own minds, the steps they would use next time when trying to decide which stakeholders should be consulted on an issue.  Ask them to share their ideas with a partner.  Considering capturing their ideas as a series of steps and posting these steps on the wall for future reference. For example, a summary of their thinking strategies might include:  - Brainstorm all the groups and individuals who might be affected by an issue  - Compare stakeholder interests. Look for patterns and trends to see if their interests or concerns are unique or overlapping  - Determine the key stakeholders by applying our criteria  - Double-check that we have been fair-minded in our decision-making rather than only selecting those whose interests and concerns match our own  Inform students that they will be practicing what they have learned about determining key stakeholders within the context of their current unit. |
| *Nurturing self-regulated thinking* | Consider gradually releasing responsibility to students for selecting the thinking strategies that would be most helpful when they make value judgements about who the key stakeholders are with regards to a particular issue as the course progresses.  Initially, you might require or encourage students to use various thinking strategies they have been introduced to here.  As time progresses and students become more adept at using these thinking strategies, consider moving them toward self-regulated thinking by encouraging them to select which thinking strategies might be most useful when faced with similar challenges. |

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Blackline Master #1

**Who should we send?**

**Read the following scenario:**

*Our school board is facing a budget crisis. We are low on funds to maintain the grounds, repair the building and buy supplies and books for classrooms. We need to do something. A development company has approached our school board with an idea. The company wants to buy some of our school property and build residential housing on it. It has proposed several different options: building an apartment on top of the school; building houses along the perimeter of our property, turning the field into an indoor stadium and building apartments on top of it, etc.*

*Although the decisions about whether or not to accept the proposal will be made at a board meeting, our school has been asked to send representatives of different stakeholder groups to the meeting. We can send 5 different representatives. Who should we send?*

Your task:

a) Brainstorm all the different groups that might be affected by this decision or who might have crucial information that should be considered. Come up with as many as you can.

Groups who might be affected by this decision:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Blackline Master #2

**Comparing Stakeholder Interests**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Stakeholder Group | Main interests or concerns | Explanation or reasons |
|  | 1.  2.  3. |  |
|  | 1.  2.  3. |  |
|  | 1.  2.  3. |  |
|  | 1.  2.  3. |  |
|  | 1.  2.  3. |  |
|  | 1.  2.  3. |  |
|  | 1.  2.  3. |  |
|  | 1.  2.  3. |  |
|  | 1.  2.  3. |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Patterns and Trends | Explanation |
| Significant differences in interests | Explanation |

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Blackline Master #3

**Who are the *key* stakeholders?**

Step 1: Brainstorm all the groups or individuals that may be affected by the issue. List them in the first column of the table below

Step 2: Add to your list any group or individual who may or may not be directly affected but might have crucial information that will help us understand the issue as a result of their experience, position, location, etc. Add them to the first column of the table below.

Step 3: Assess each group or individual according to the criteria developed to help us identify a “key stakeholder”.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Groups and Individuals to be Considered** | **Decision: Are they *key* stakeholders?**  **Explain your decision with reference**  **to the criteria for judgement.** | | **Criteria for Judgement** |
|  | * Yes * No |  | This group or individual…   * will likely experience the issue differently than other groups * is often unrepresented or underrepresented * is likely to contribute valuable new information based on experience, location, position or other factors |
|  | * Yes * No |  |
|  | * Yes * No |  |
|  | * Yes * No |  |
|  | * Yes * No |  |
|  | * Yes * No |  |
|  | * Yes * No |  |
|  | * Yes * No |  |
|  | * Yes * No |  |
|  | * Yes * No |  |
|  | * Yes * No |  |
|  | * Yes * No |  |

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Blackline Master #4

**The Lorax**

By Dr. Seuss

At the far end of town

where the Grickle-grass grows

and the wind smells slow-and-sour when it blows

and no birds ever sing excepting old crows...

is the Street of the Lifted Lorax.

And deep in the Grickle-grass, some people say,

if you look deep enough you can still see, today,

where the Lorax once stood

just as long as it could

before somebody lifted the Lorax away.

What was the Lorax?

And why was it there?

And why was it lifted and taken somewhere

from the far end of town where the Grickle-grass grows?

The old Once-ler still lives here.

Ask him. He knows.

You won't see the Once-ler.

Don't knock at his door.

He stays in his Lerkim on top of his store.

He lurks in his Lerkim, cold under the roof,

where he makes his own clothes

out of miff-muffered moof.

And on special dank midnights in August,

he peeks

out of the shutters

and sometimes he speaks

and tells how the Lorax was lifted away.

He'll tell you, perhaps...

if you're willing to pay.

On the end of a rope

he lets down a tin pail

and you have to toss in fifteen cents

and a nail

and the shell of a great-great-great-

grandfather snail.

Then he pulls up the pail,

makes a most careful count

to see if you've paid him

the proper amount.

Then he hides what you paid him

away in his Snuvv,

his secret strange hole

in his gruvvulous glove.

Then he grunts, "I will call you by Whisper-ma-Phone,

for the secrets I tell you are for your ears alone."

SLUPP!

Down slupps the Whisper-ma-Phone to your ear

and the old Once-ler's whispers are not very clear,

since they have to come down

through a snergelly hose,

and he sounds

as if he had

smallish bees up his nose.

"Now I'll tell you,"he says, with his teeth sounding gray,

"how the Lorax got lifted and taken away...

It all started way back...

such a long, long time back...

Way back in the days when the grass was still green

and the pond was still wet

and the clouds were still clean,

and the song of the Swomee-Swans rang out in space...

one morning, I came to this glorious place.

And I first saw the trees!

The Truffula Trees!

The bright-colored tufts of the Truffula Trees!

Mile after mile in the fresh morning breeze.

And, under the trees, I saw Brown Bar-ba-loots

frisking about in their Bar-ba-loot suits

as they played in the shade and ate Truffula fruits.

From the rippulous pond

came the comfortable sound

of the Humming-Fish humming

while splashing around.

But those trees! Those trees!

Those Truffula Trees!

All my life I'd been searching

for trees such as these.

The touch of their tufts

was much softer than silk.

And they had the sweet smell

of fresh butterfly milk.

I felt a great leaping

of joy in my heart.

I knew just what I'd do!

I unloaded my cart.

In no time at all, I had built a small shop.

Then I chopped down a Truffula Tree with one chop.

And with great skillful skill and with great speedy speed,

I took the soft tuft, and I knitted a Thneed!

The instant I'd finished, I heard a ga-Zump!

I looked.

I saw something pop out of the stump

of the tree I'd chopped down. It was sort of a man.

Describe him?... That's hard. I don't know if I can.

He was shortish. And oldish.

And brownish. And mossy.

And he spoke with a voice

that was sharpish and bossy.

"Mister!" he said with a sawdusty sneeze,

"I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees.

I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues.

And I'm asking you, sir, at the top if my lungs"-

he was very upset as he shouted and puffed-

"What's that THING you've made out of my Truffula tuft?"

"Look, Lorax," I said."There's no cause for alarm.

I chopped just one tree. I am doing no harm.

I'm being quite useful. This thing is a Thneed.

A Thneed's a Fine-Something-That-All-People-Need!

It's a shirt. It's a sock. It's a glove, It's a hat.

But it has other uses. Yes, far beyond that.

You can use it for carpets. For pillows! For sheets!

Or curtains! Or covers for bicycle seats!"

The Lorax said,

"Sir! You are crazy with greed.

There is no one on earth

who would buy that fool Thneed!"

But the very next minute I proved he was wrong.

For, just at that minute, a chap came along,

and he thought the Thneed I had knitted was great.

He happily bought it for three ninety-eight

I laughed at the Lorax, "You poor stupid guy!

You never can tell what some people will buy."

"I repeat," cried the Lorax,

"I speak for the trees!"

"I'm busy," I told him.

"Shut up, if you please."

I rushed 'cross the room, and in no time at all,

built a radio-phone. I put in a quick call.

I called all my brothers and uncles and aunts

and I said, "Listen here! Here's a wonderful chance

for the whole Once-ler Family to get mighty rich!

Get over here fast! Take the road to North Nitch.

Turn left at Weehawken. Sharp right at South Stitch."

And, in no time at all,

in the factory I built,

the whole Once-ler Family

was working full tilt.

We were all knitting Thneeds

just as busy as bees,

to the sound of the chopping

of Truffula Trees.

Then...

Oh! Baby! Oh!

How my business did grow!

Now, chopping one tree

at a time

was too slow.

So I quickly invented my Super-Axe-Hacker

which whacked off four Truffula Trees at one smacker.

We were making Thneeds

four times as fast as before!

And that Lorax?...

He didn't show up any more.

But the next week

he knocked

on my new office door.

He snapped, "I am the Lorax who speaks for the trees

which you seem to be chopping as fast as you please.

But I'm also in charge of the Brown Bar-ba-loots

who played in the shade in their Bar-ba-loot suits

and happily lived, eating Truffula Fruits.

"NOW... thanks to your hacking my trees to the ground,

there's not enought Truffula Fruit to go 'round.

And my poor Bar-ba-loots are all getting the crummies

because they have gas, and no food, in their tummies!

"They loved living here. But I can't let them stay.

They'll have to find food. And I hope that they may.

Good luck, boys," he cried. And he sent them away.

I, the old Once-ler, felt sad

as I watched them all go.

BUT...

business is business!

And business must grow

regardless of crummies in tummies, you know.

I meant no harm. I most truly did not.

But I had to grow bigger.So bigger I got.

I biggered my factory. I biggered my roads.

I biggered my wagons. I biggered the loads

of the Thneeds I shipped out. I was shipping them forth

to the South! To the East! To the West! To the North!

I went right on biggering... selling more Thneeds.

And I biggered my money, which everyone needs.

Then again he came back! I was fixing some pipes

when that old-nuisance Lorax came back with more gripes.

"I am the Lorax," he coughed and he whiffed.

He sneezed and he snuffled. He snarggled. He sniffed.

"Once-ler!" he cried with a cruffulous croak.

"Once-ler! You're making such smogulous smoke!

My poor Swomee-Swans... why, they can't sing a note!

No one can sing who has smog in his throat.

"And so," said the Lorax,

"-please pardon my cough-

they cannot live here.

So I'm sending them off.

"Where will they go?...

I don't hopefully know.

They may have to fly for a month... or a year...

To escape from the smog you've smogged up around here.

"What's more," snapped the Lorax. (His dander was up.)

"Let me say a few words about Gluppity-Glupp.

Your machine chugs on, day and night without stop

making Gluppity-Glupp. Also Schloppity-Schlopp.

And what do you do with this leftover goo?...

I'll show you. You dirty old Once-ler man, you!

"You're glumping the pond where the Humming-Fish hummed!

No more can they hum, for their gills are all gummed.

So I'm sending them off. Oh, their future is dreary.

They'll walk on their fins and get woefully weary

in search of some water that isn't so smeary."

And then I got mad.

I got terribly mad.

I yelled at the Lorax, "Now listen here, Dad!

All you do is yap-yap and say, 'Bad! Bad! Bad! Bad!'

Well, I have my rights, sir, and I'm telling you

I intend to go on doing just what I do!

And, for your information, you Lorax, I'm figgering

On biggering

and BIGGERING

andBIGGERING

and BIGGERING,

turning MORE Truffula Trees into Thneeds

which everyone, EVERYONE, EVERYONE needs!"

And at that very moment, we heard a loud whack!

From outside in the fields came a sickening smack

of an axe on a tree. Then we heard the tree fall.

The very last Truffula Tree of them all!

No more trees. No more Thneeds. No more work to be done.

So, in no time, my uncles and aunts, every one,

all waved me good-bye. They jumped into my cars

and drove away under the smoke-smuggered stars.

Now all that was left 'neath the bad smelling-sky

was my big empty factory...

the Lorax...

and I.

The Lorax said nothing. Just gave me a glance...

just gave me a very sad, sad backward glance...

as he lifted himself by the seat of his pants.

And I'll never forget the grim look on his face

when he heisted himself and took leave of this place,

through a hole in the smog, without leaving a trace.

And all that the Lorax left here in this mess

was a small pile of rocks, with one word...

"UNLESS."

Whatever that meant, well, I just couldn't guess.

That was long, long ago.

But each day since that day

I've sat here and worried

and worried away.

Through the years, while my buildings

have fallen apart,

I've worried about it

with all of my heart.

"But now," says the Once-ler,

"Now that you're here,

the word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear.

UNLESS someone like you

cares a whole awful lot,

nothing is going to get better.

It's not.

"SO...

Catch!" calls the Once-ler.

He lets something fall.

"It's a Truffula Seed.

It's the last one of all!

You're in charge of the last of the Truffula Seeds.

And Truffula Trees are what everyone needs.

Plant a new Truffula.Treat it with care.

Give it clean water. And feed it fresh air.

Grow a forest. Protect it from axes that hack.

Then the Lorax

and all of his friends

may come back."

~Dr. Seuss